

Good Friday Message

A few months ago I needed to have a tree pruned as it was surrounding the power lines to my house. As it was too close to the wires I paid a lot of money for a tree surgeon to remove some of the tree. He ended up taking far more than I had asked for and for quite a time the tree looked as though it was ready to die. I needed to shape it a little more as it was hanging out too close to the path and I hoped it would come back OK.

Each morning as I walked out to my car I would look across and see this tree and shake my head in sadness. With it being trimmed though the streetlight was able to cast more light towards my front door. It did seem lighter outside which was helpful for security. But the tree looked downcast and bare. As you can see though, the tree has changed.



Without me watering it or feeding it or doing anything at all it is now flourishing. And if you look carefully you may be able to see there is a sense of shape about the tree. Perhaps there is even a little window through the greenery. Perhaps you might even see a message of hope in what seemed to be dead is now alive.

The challenge for us at Easter is that we are talking about death then life.

Good Friday is about death. It is about suffering but it is not suffering without a purpose.

In your worship kits you have received some smooth stones. I want you to take one and look at it. Feel it in your hand. Feel how smooth it is. Each one is unique. Yet the smoothness has come about by being tossed and tumbled by water. There is something in the journey of the pebble through water that we will never know but it has come through the turbulence of its existence to now be in the palm of your hand. When you picked it up it may have felt cool or cold. As you have held it, something of your warmth has come into it and it has changed.

Now I invite you to put your stone down and turn to the water in your bowl. Gently dip your fingers in the bowl of water and it feels so different to the stone. As you move your fingers in the water they move freely and it is hard to feel water. While the stone was firm and solid to touch water is different and impossible to hold. Yet this water is part of the water throughout the whole of creation. We are made up of a lot of water and we need it for life.

In the journey of Jesus' life we are reminded of both water and stones. Jesus was born through the waters of birth. He was baptised in the waters of the Jordan River. He called fishermen to be his disciples and they fished in the water and found food. Jesus ate the fish and drank the wine born from the grapes which needed water to grow. He turned water into wine. And when his friend Lazarus died, Jesus wept the salty water which are tears.

Yet in his life was both joy and suffering. On Good Friday we remember the suffering. The garden in which he prayed- perhaps in anguish at what lay ahead. The arrest when one of his disciples betrayed him. The prison where he was beaten and kept. The judgement where the Roman ruler washed his hands of him. And then the crucifixion.

I am reminded of the seed pods of some of our native trees. They are closed and the seed is held inside safely but without any signs of growth. They are worthless and do nothing sometimes for years. And it is only through the heat of fire that they are finally able to burst open and release the seed which lies inside. THEN they are able to fall to the ground and begin a new journey as they are changed.



We can never know what Jesus went through on that day of death. We know what has been written in the scriptures but that is limited. We can try and imagine but we will come up short.

It is like a woman trying to describe the fullness of her labour in giving birth to a child. We can imagine, we can think of our own experiences but it is not the same.

So Jesus suffered and died.

For us, it is important that we know this but more importantly why.

In our faith we are reminded of Good Friday in some way throughout the rest of the year. In our baptism we are reminded of Jesus. He alone could completely fulfil the law of the Old Testament. And in his death, he alone could have the power to overcome death itself.

Today we can mourn and we can bring to God all the guilt we may feel- for all we have done wrong, for all we have done or left undone which has caused hurt to others. Today we can sit at the cross and feel the depths of pain in our lives. Now we can stay at the cross- knowing that we will not stay here for long. Like the tree and the stone and the water, life does change.

My prayer for you is that you might spend time thinking about the cross- the suffering and the dying of Christ, and in doing so be prepared to change. For God is with you in ALL things and at all times.